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ABSTRACT

Good performance criteria can and must help define educational goals and serve as an instructional tool in the classroom. The rationale for considering instructional usefulness when designing performance criteria begins with the proposition that clearly stated performance criteria are excellent instructional tools. It is also apparent that classroom teachers are the ones who will be administering the performance assessments that are developed, and that the classroom is the place in which change will occur. Good performance criteria help teachers and students alike understand the targets of instruction. The following design considerations are important in working toward the goal of good performance criteria: (1) the need for generalized criteria; (2) development of both holistic and analytical trait systems; (3) covering all that is important; and (4) having teachers do the scoring. Maximizing the impact of the performance assessment dollar means having assessments that teachers can use in the classroom. Five figures list and illustrate aspects of the criteria development process. (SLD)

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DESIGNING SCORING RUBRICS FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

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Introduction

Good quality performance criteria (often expressed in a scoring guide or rubric) should do more than merely give us a way to assign a score on a performance assessment. Good performance criteria can also help us define our instructional goals and targets for students, and can be used as an instructional tool in the classroom. In this paper I will argue that not only *can* performance criteria be used in this fashion, they *must* be designed to function in this fashion if we want our performance assessments to work.

There are several things that can diminish the usefulness of performance criteria as instructional tools. If we accept the premise that performance criteria must be designed to support instruction, then we need to build several features into them. These features will also be discussed in this paper.

Rationale For Considering Instructional Usefulness When Designing Performance Criteria

Reason #1: Clearly stated performance criteria are excellent instructional tools.

Would you agree with the following proposition:

> *Whenever we make a judgment about anything we use criteria whether we can articulate them or not.*

Most people agree that this is so. In classrooms, judgments about students are being made all the time. For example, teachers daily make judgments about students. These judgments are based on criteria. Therefore, there are only two choices: we can either make our criteria crystal clear to students or we can make them guess. How often have we made our students guess at criteria because we either have difficulty articulating them, were too busy to do so, or did not realize it was important to do so?

> *(Students have) been conditioned to believe that great papers "just happen," that they are a guessing game, and that one finds out what to do after it's too late* (Krest, 1990).

Teachers, however, are not the only ones in the classroom making judgments. Not only do students make judgments about themselves and their work without encouragement, we are now systematically asking students to self-reflect and self-assess as a way for students to take control of their own learning, and as a way to accomplish some of the critical thinking goals we now hold for them. If all judgments are based on criteria, students use criteria during their self-assessments and self-reflections. We again have only two choices: either we can systematically assist students in exploring criteria that reflect the important dimensions of tasks (as articulated by themselves or others) or we can leave them on their own to struggle through as best they can.

I want (students) to see evaluation in its best sense -- a source to inform teaching and learning. To that end we develop a vocabulary for commenting on the admirable and problematic aspects of writing...The more we examine samples, the richer and more helpful this language of evaluation becomes (Erickson, 1992).

"Winning points" may be the final goal of classroom work as it is of the sports endeavor, but the grade, like the final score of the game, never taught anyone how to win again, or why they lost. For the truly successful contenders, playing the game is always about learning the game...however often it seems to be about scoring more wins than losses (Lucas, 1992).

The point here is that the development of good performance criteria is not just an exercise in developing an assessment tool that is external to the instructional process -- one that is used only to "monitor" student progress. Rather, good performance criteria help teachers and students understand the targets of instruction: What is expected? What does good look like? What do I want to accomplish? How will I know when I'm there? What kind of feedback do I give to improve student work next time? Why did I win? How can I win again? They also provide a vocabulary for discussing work.

In fact, many teachers have reported that the process of developing the performance criteria is at least as useful as having the final assessments in place, because it forces them to articulate and come to agreement on what they value (Harman, 1992; Hebert, 1992; Murphy & Smith, 1990; Portfolio, 1990; Sugarman, 1989).

Reason #2: Who will be administering our performance assessments, anyway?

Classroom teachers will be, that's who. What will happen if they don't see the value or rationale in what they are doing? It might be that our wonderful, "authentic" performance assessments will not actually result in better information after all. If we, as large-scale assessors, don't take the needs of teachers into account, we also might not get what we want: better measures of student achievement.

Reason #3: Where does change occur?

Again, change occurs in the classroom. Assessment can only be an agent for change if it promotes change in the classroom. As seen above, clearly articulated performance criteria can change instruction. As long as we're spending so much money for performance assessments, why not build in features that increase the chance that they will be useful in the classroom as instructional tools?

What Do Instructionally Useful Performance Criteria Look Like?

If we accept the premise that performance assessments need to be designed with instructional usefulness in mind, we need to consider whether there are design features that are more or less effective in accomplishing this goal. There are, in fact, different types of performance criteria, and not all of them are designed with the instructional end-user in mind. In fact, the performance criteria designed for many assessments emphasize ease and efficiency over instructional usefulness. This is understandable for large-scale applications, but perhaps shortsighted.

Design Consideration #1: The Need For Generalized Criteria.

Consider the math performance assessment in Figure 1 from the publication *Riverside Curriculum Assessment System: Performance Test Exercises* (1991).

------Insert Figure 1 About Here------

Note that the task is open-response (students construct a response). Also note that the criteria by which the performance is evaluated are tied directly to the task; that is, there are a different set of performance criteria for each task. To get a "4" on this task, the student has to draw a particular picture and provide a particular explanation. This type of scoring can be very efficient for large-scale uses; it is both fast and reliable. The biggest problem is that it is not useful instructionally. It helps you to see what good performance looks like on this one task, but doesn't help you see what good math problem solving looks like in general. Scoring this exercise will not necessarily help you score the next one and will not help students be able to "win" next time.

I propose that we should be aiming for performance criteria that provide an overall picture of the target, not just how the target manifests itself in a single problem. For example, in the area of math problem solving, consider the four-trait analytical model being developed by the state of Oregon, shown in Figure 2.

------Insert Figure 2 About Here------

These same criteria are applied to *all* open-ended and open-response math problems. Evaluating one problem solution will help you evaluate the next solution because the goal is to understand what good problem solving is, in general; the goal is generalization. Of course, in order to use the system well, raters (including teachers and students) have to see many samples of problem solutions. Thus, it takes longer to train raters than using systems where criteria are tied to tasks, and consistency of judgments between individuals, at least at first, is lower. However, *in the long run* we, and students, will have greater understanding if we shoot for more generalized performance criteria. (Which would **you** rather have **your** students do: score a bunch of performance tasks where each task used different criteria, or a more generalized evaluation procedure that tried to analyze what makes problem solving good in general?)

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Caveat time: When the assessment goal is measurement of conceptual knowledge, then specific performance criteria might be warranted. For example, consider the performance assessments developed by Lake County Educational Service Center (1992) in Illinois. They've developed a series of performance tasks to assess student ability to apply their knowledge of solid waste disposal. For example, students take a used lunch tray and indicate how each item might be reduced, reused, or recycled. Responses are scored for degree of "correctness;" in other words, how well students understand the concepts involved.

When the goal is conceptual knowledge, it might be useful to have performance criteria that clearly articulate what conceptual understanding looks like for specific cases, rather than having a generalized scoring guide for conceptual knowledge, although I've seen performance criteria taking both approaches.

Design Consideration #2: Holistic v. Analytical Trait Systems

Both holistic and analytical trait systems require judgment. Holistic systems rate a performance as a whole -- one score. Analytical trait systems require judgmental ratings along several dimensions thought to be important. For example, consider Oregon's six-trait analytical scoring system for writing, shown in Figure 3. In this system, scores of 1-5 are given for each of the six traits of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions. (The same set of criteria are used for all types of writing.) It's not that holistic systems look for different features in the writing than analytical trait systems, it's just that they are all weighed together to arrive at the final, single score.

------Insert Figure 3 About Here------

Holistic scoring is more efficient for large-scale assessment than analytical trait scoring. It is faster and raters can be trained more quickly. However, once again, holistic scores are not as useful instructionally. Two students can receive a "3" for vastly different reasons; say one is very strong in conventions and weak in ideas and voice, while the other is strong in ideas and voice, but weak in conventions. This not only tends to be confusing to students, it also makes it more difficult to articulate to students what good writing looks like. Analytic trait systems communicate more specifically.

Training students to revise their writing trait by trait is a very powerful instructional tool. Consider the student work shown in Figure 4 -- two papers and a self-reflection. These papers were written by the same student, one at the beginning of the sixth grade, the other at the end during the first year the student's teacher taught the students to revise their writing trait by trait. The self-reflection clearly shows that the student understands why her writing has improved.

------Insert Figure 4 About Here------

Assessments communicate and model what we value. Which is better to model in large-scale assessment, a quick holistic system, or an analytical trait system that has a great deal of instructional potential in the classroom? As long as we're doing performance assessment why not have it be an in-service tool as well?

Design Consideration #3: Covering All That Is Important

Good performance criteria cover the right "stuff." Consider the *Informal Writing Inventory* (Scholastic Testing Service, 1986), a screening instrument for special education. One portion of this assessment requires students to look at a picture and write a paragraph telling about what is happening in the picture. The paragraph is evaluated using the criteria shown in Figure 5.

------Insert Figure 5 About Here------

Now, granted that this assessment might just focus on grammar, but still you would probably not want to draw any conclusions about student ability to write from just looking at grammar. Thus, the criteria by which this performance was evaluated do not cover all the relevant dimensions of the task.

Although this is an extreme case, some large-scale performance assessment systems tend in the same direction. For example, the Illinois analytical trait writing assessment does not score voice and word choice because the developers felt that it would be too difficult to get consistency in scores; it is just too personal. What does this communicate to teachers about what is important to concentrate on in writing? What effect will this have on instruction? Anecdotal reports from teachers in Illinois indicate that, in fact, teachers do concentrate their instruction on the traits measured in the assessment. Do we leave things out just because they are difficult to define?

Design Consideration #4: Have teachers do the scoring.

Although this might not be a consideration for actually designing performance criteria, it is certainly a design consideration for the performance assessment in general. Why spend all that money to have <u>someone else</u> learn what you value in a performance? If teachers are doing the scoring, they are learning information that can be taken back into the classroom to improve instruction. (Assuming, of course, that the performance criteria are designed according to points #1-3 above.) What about "objectivity?" Our experience is that teachers, just like everyone else, can be trained to be consistent in scoring.

Conclusion

If we want to maximize the impact of our performance assessment dollar, we should design performance criteria that teachers can use in the classroom. If we don't, our "new" assessments might not have any more impact than our "old" assessments.

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Figure 1

Performance Criteria Tied To Task

Task:

Mr. Ramirez helped four other students make key holders. He gave Rhonda, Sam, Tony, and Uta a board and told them to share it equally. first, Rhonda measured and cut one fourth of the board. next, Sam measured and cut one third of the remaining board. Finally, Tony measured and cut one half of the remaining board. Uta used the piece that was left. Did the four students hare the board equally? Draw a picture and explain your answer.

Performance Criteria:

A 4 response contains both a picture and an explanation that indicate a clear understanding of the pattern; contains a picture showing a whole divided into four equal parts; contains an explanation that enhances the picture by comparing the size of each piece using either sentences, computations, or a combination of both.

A 3 response contains a picture that indicates a clear understanding of the pattern but only an attempt at an explanation; contains an explanation that indicates a clear understanding of the pattern but only an attempt at a picture; has limited detail in the picture or the explanation.

A 2 response offers an adequate picture only; offers an adequate explanation only; contains an explanation that does not enhance the picture; may be difficult to understand due to errors in language and grammar.

A 1 response makes some attempt at a picture or an explanation; is unclear.

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Figure 2

Oregon Four-trait Analytical Scoring Model for Math Problem Solving

Conceptual Understanding of the Problem: Conceptual Understanding includes the student's ability to interpret the problem and select appropriate information to apply a strategy for solution. Evidence of conceptual understanding is communicated through making connections between the problem situation, relevant information, and logical/reasonable responses. Students demonstrate conceptual understanding in math when they provide evidence that they can use an interrelate models, diagrams, and varied representations of concepts; can compare, contrast, and integrate related concepts; and can interpret the assumptions and relations involving concepts in mathematical settings.

Procedural Knowledge: Procedural knowledge deals with the student's ability to demonstrate appropriate use of mathematics. Evidence of procedural knowledge is provided in the mathematics the student chooses to use and their ability to select and apply the appropriate procedures correctly. Procedural knowledge includes the various numerical algorithms in mathematics that have been created as tools to meet specific needs in an efficient manner. It encompasses the abilities to read and produce graphs and tables, execute geometric constructions, perform noncomputational skills such as rounding and ordering, verify and justify the correctness of a procedure using concrete models or symbolic methods, and extend or modify procedures to deal with factors inherent in the problem setting.

Problem solving Skills and Strategies: Problem solving requires the use of many skills which are often used in certain combinations before the problem is solved. A combination or sequence of skills used in working toward the solution is referred to here as a strategy. Strong student responses should demonstrate the ability to use problem solving skills/strategies and demonstrate good reasoning that lead to a successful resolution of a problem.

Communication: Effective communication is essential to learning and knowing mathematics. mathematics communication is demonstrated by the use of symbols and terms which attach specific, and sometimes different, meanings to common words. In assessing the student's ability to communicate mathematically, particular attention should be paid to both the meanings they attach to the concepts and procedures of mathematics and also their fluency in explaining, understanding, and evaluating the ideas expressed in mathematics.

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Figure 3

Oregon Writing Assessment Six-Trait Analytical Model

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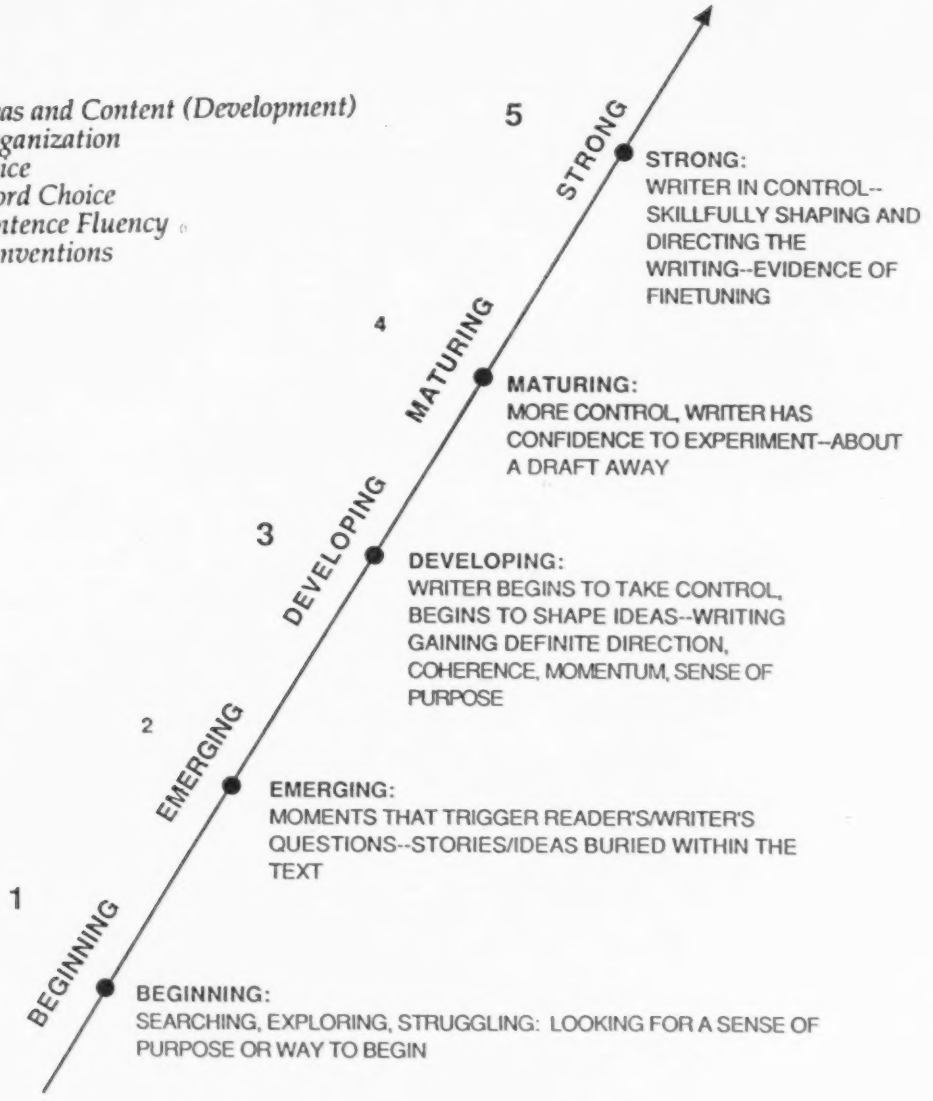
ANALYTICAL SCORING GUIDE: TRAITS

- *Ideas and Content (Development)*
- *Organization*
- *Voice*
- *Word Choice*
- *Sentence Fluency*
- *Conventions*



Developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, January 1992. This scoring guide is an updated version of the one that appears in Spandel and Stiggins, Creating Writers. Addison-Wesley: 1990. The original guide was developed by teachers from the Beaverton, Oregon School District in 1984. The Laboratory gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the more than 5,000 teachers whose shared insights and comments have gone into this revision.

IDEAS AND CONTENT (Development)

5: **This paper is clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story line. Ideas are fresh and original.**

- The writer seems to be writing from experiences and shows insight: a good sense of how events unfold, how people respond to life and to each other.
- Supporting, relevant, telling details give the reader important information that he or she could not personally bring to the text.
- The writing has balance: Main ideas stand out.
- The writer seems in control and develops the topic in an enlightening, entertaining way.
- The writer works with and shapes ideas, making connections and sharing insights.

3: **The paper is clear and focused. The topic shows promise, even though development is still limited, sketchy or general.**

- The writer is beginning to define the topic, but is not there yet. It is pretty easy to see where the writer is headed, though more information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
- The writer does seem to be writing from experience, but has some trouble going from general observations to specifics.
- Ideas are reasonably clear and purposeful, even though they may not be explicit, detailed, personalized, or expanded to show indepth understanding.
- Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in expanding, clarifying, or adding new insights.
- Themes or main points seem a blend of the original and the predictable.

1: **As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- Information is very limited or unclear.
- The text is very repetitious, or reads like a collection of random thoughts from which no central theme emerges.
- Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what's critical.
- The writer has not yet begun to define the topic in a meaningful or personal way.
- The writer may still be in search of a real topic, or sense of direction to guide development.

ORGANIZATION

5: **The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation is compelling and moves the reader through the text.**

- Details seem to fit where they're placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
- An inviting introduction draws the reader in and a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of resolution.
- Pacing is very well controlled; the writer delivers needed information at just the right moment, then moves on.
- Transitions are smooth and weave the separate threads of meaning into one cohesive whole.
- Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it.

3: **The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader from point to point without undue confusion.**

- The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not leave the reader with a satisfying sense of resolution.
- Sequencing is usually logical. It may sometimes be too obvious, or otherwise ineffective.
- Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes spurts ahead too quickly or spends too much time on the obvious.
- Transitions often work well; at times though, connections between ideas are fuzzy or call for inferences.
- Despite a few problems, the organization does not seriously get in the way of the main point or storyline.

1: **The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem strung together in a random, haphazard fashion--or else there is no identifiable internal structure at all. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- The writer has not yet drafted a real lead or conclusion.
- Transitions are not yet clearly defined; connections between ideas seem confusing or incomplete.
- Sequencing, if it exists, needs work.
- Pacing feels awkward, with lots of time spent on minor details or big, hard-to-follow leaps from point to point.
- Lack of organization makes it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or storyline.

VOICE

5: **The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. Clearly, the writer is involved in the text and is writing to be read.**

- The paper is honest and written from the heart. It has the ring of conviction.
- The language is natural yet provocative; it brings the topic to life.
- The reader feels a strong sense of interaction with the writer and senses the person behind the words.
- The projected tone and voice give flavor to the writer's message and seem very appropriate for the purpose and audience.

3: **The writer seems sincere, but not genuinely engaged, committed, or involved. The result is pleasant and sometimes even personable, but short of compelling.**

- The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing manner. Moments here and there amuse, surprise, delight or move the reader.
- Voice may emerge strongly on occasion, then retreat behind general, vague, tentative, or abstract language.
- The writing hides as much of the writer as it reveals.
- The writer seems aware of an audience, but often to weigh words carefully, to stands at a distance, and to avoid risk.

1: **The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the writing is flat, lifeless or mechanical; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- The reader has a hard time sensing the writer behind the words. The writer does not seem to reach out to an audience, or make use of voice to connect with that audience.
- The writer speaks in a kind of monotone that tends to flatten all potential high's and low's of the message.
- The writing communicates on a functional level, with no apparent attempt to move or involve the reader.
- The writer is not yet sufficiently engaged or at home with the topic to take risks or share him-/herself.

WORD CHOICE

5: **Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way. The writing is full and rich, yet concise.**

- Words are specific and accurate; they seem just right.
- Imagery is strong.
- Powerful verbs give the writing energy.
- Striking words and phrases often catch the reader's eye, but the language is natural and never overdone.
- Expression is fresh and appealing; slang is used sparingly.

3: **The language is functional, even if it lacks punch; it does get the message across.**

- Words are almost always correct and adequate (though not necessarily precise); it is easy to understand what the writer means.
- Familiar words and phrases communicate, but rarely capture the reader's imagination. The writer seems reluctant to stretch.
- The writer usually avoids experimenting; however, the paper may have one or two fine moments.
- Attempts at colorful language often come close to the mark, but may seem overdone or out of place.
- A few energetic verbs liven things up now and then; the reader yearns for more.
- The writer may lean a little on redundancy, or slip in a cliche--but never relies on these crutches to the point of annoyance.

1: **The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- Language is so vague and abstract (e.g., *It was a fun time, It was nice and stuff*) that only the most general message comes through.
- Persistent redundancy clouds the message and distracts the reader.
- Cliches or jargon serves as a crutch.
- Words are used incorrectly in more than one or two cases, sometimes making the message hard to decipher.
- The writer is not yet selecting words that would help the reader to a better understanding.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

5: **The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with consistently strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable.**

- Sentence structure reflects logic and sense, helping to show how ideas relate. Purposeful sentence beginnings guide the reader readily from one sentence to another.
- The writing sounds natural and fluent; it glides along with one sentence flowing effortlessly into the next.
- Sentences display an effective combination of power and grace.
- Variation in sentence structure and length adds interest to the text.
- Fragments, if used at all, work well.
- Dialogue, if used, sounds natural.

3: **The text hums along efficiently for the most part, though it may lack a certain rhythm or grace. It tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.**

- The writer shows good control over simple sentence structure, more variable control over complex sentence structure.
- Sentences may not seem skillfully crafted or musical, but they are grammatical and solid. They hang together. They get the job done.
- The writer may tend to favor a particular pattern (e.g., subject-verb, subject-verb), but there is at least *some* variation in sentence length and structure (Sentence beginnings are NOT all alike).
- The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (e.g., connecting words like *however, therefore, naturally, on the other hand, to be specific, for example, next, first of all, later, still,* etc.) that show how one sentence leads into the next.
- Some parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be a little stiff, choppy or awkward. Overall, though, it's pretty easy to read this paper aloud if you practice.

1: **The paper is difficult to follow or read aloud. Most sentences tend to be choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward; they need work. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- Sentences do not sound natural, the way someone might speak. Word patterns are often jarring or irregular, forcing the reader to pause or read over.
- Sentence structure tends to obscure meaning, rather than showing the reader how ideas relate.
- Word patterns are very monotonous (e.g., subject-verb, subject-verb-object). There is little or no real variety in length or structure.
- Sentences may be very choppy. Or, words may run together in one giant "sentence" linked by "*and's*" or other connectives.
- The text does not invite expressive oral reading.

CONVENTIONS

5: **The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing) and uses them effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few and minor the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them.**

- Paragraphing tends to be sound and to reinforce the organizational structure.
- Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
- Punctuation is smooth and guides the reader through the text.
- Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
- The writer may manipulate conventions--particularly grammar--for stylistic effect.
- The writing is sufficiently long and complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions.*
- Only light editing would be required to polish the text for publication.

3: **The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. However, the paper would require moderate editing prior to publication. Errors are numerous or serious enough to be somewhat distracting, but the writer also handles some conventions well.**

- Spelling is usually correct (or reasonably phonetic) on common words.
- Terminal (end-of-sentence) punctuation is almost always correct; internal punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons) may be incorrect or missing.
- Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning.
- Paragraphing is attempted. Paragraphs sometimes run together or begin in the wrong places.
- The paper seems to reflect light, but not extensive or thorough, editing.

*This criterion applies at grade 7 and up only.

1: **Errors in spelling, punctuation, usage and grammar, capitalization and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:**

- The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning.
- Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
- Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.
- Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (e.g., every sentence) that it does not relate to organization of the text.
- Errors in grammar and usage are very noticeable, and may affect meaning.
- Extensive editing would be required to polish the text for publication.

Figure 4

Sixth Grade Student Writing and Self-Reflection

California

I went down to my Grandma's house in California and I got to ride hourses, I swimmed, went shopping, saw old friends, I went to a party, I went to the new Merine World, and I had a lot of fun.

I drove down there in a car with my uncle and drove back with him. He went down to visit his mom and dad so it worked out pretty good.

I use to live in California till a year ago. it was a 30 min. drive away from San Francico I live in Walnut Creek. I went to school at Walnut Acres--for 4 years, sense 2 grade. Then moved to Oregon and we bought a gas station. When I got to go I was glad and happy my mom let me. I HAD FUN!

A Little Mouse Statue

Every time I walk in my room, or pass my dresser, I see something thats very special to me. It is a little statue of a mouse. His tiny hands are expanded as far apart as they allow themselves to be. And, at the bottom of the statue it reads, "I love you this much."

I believe I was four years old when my grandma took me over to her bedroom closet one day and got my statue off the very top shelf. Then, with extreme care, she unwrapped a small object and handed it to me. It was the mouse statue.

Ever since then, even now, I have him placed on my dresser to admire every time I pass my dresser, or stand next to my dresser dressing or putting on earrings, I think of my grandma.

I think of the way my grandma always expanded her arms and said, "I LOVE YOU THIS MUCH" just like the little mouse statue does. And, I'd do the same. Then we'd hug each other followed by enormous kisses. Her gentle and kind smile, the glitter in her eyes, and the way she always stuck up for me if I was in a fight with my mom are all things I remember about her. Today, she still takes me special places, and she's always their if I need some one to talk to or get advice from!

I will always treat my statue with the most of respect just like my grandma asked me to. And I will always treasure its unique way of making me feel close to my grandma even when she's not around every time I glance at him. And who knows, maybe one day I'll be giving him to my grandaughter!!!

I have become a better writer this year. I have learned to put more focus in my writing and stick with one topic. I think about my topic before I write, and I share my writing in a writing group. That is something I did not like to do at first, but now I do. I think my writing has a lot more voice now. Voice is the part of your writing that shows how you feel about your topic because the thoughts and feelings come from your heart. This year we read Charlotte's Web, and that is a book that I think has a lot of voice. I have also worked very hard on my word choice. I try to find just the right word to say what I mean and not just the first word that comes into my mind. the way I have grown the most is that I like to write a lot more than I use to, especially poems. I think I could be a poet if I wanted to, and I think my writing shows that.

Figure 5

Informal Writing Inventory Scoring Guide

"The error index indicates the frequency with which errors are made...In a 100-word passage, if 60 errors were produced, the error index could be expressed as 60/100, or 60%....The communication index is the ratio of errors that disrupt communication to total errors...As the communication index approaches 12, the likelihood increases that the writer is disabled. However, the error index and the communication index can be interpreted and validated only by reference to each other. Whereas the error index indicates the number of mistakes, the communication index indicates the writing quality." (Informal Writing Inventory, 1986, pp. 4-5)

The types of errors shown in the scoring guide include: incorrect abbreviations, misspellings, poor punctuation, incorrect capitalizations, incorrect grammar, illegible writing, sentence fragments, and incorrect use of plurals (p. 9). These are grouped into the three areas of handwriting, spelling, and grammar (p. 15).